

Q DEERE maister, quod this sike man,
How han ye fare sith that March bigan?
I saugh yow noght this fourtenyght or
moore.
God woot, quod he, laboured have I ful soore;
And specially for thy savacioun
Have I seyde many a precious orisoun,
And for oure othere freendes, God hem blesse!
I have today been at youre chirche at messe,
And seyde a sermoun after my symple wit,
Nat al after the text of hooly writ;
for it is hard to yow, as I suppose,
And therfore wol I teche yow al the glose.
Glosyng is a glorious thyng, certeyn,
for lettre sleeth, so as we clerkes seyn.
There have I taught hem to be charitable,
And spende hir good ther it is resonable;
And ther I saugh oure dame, al where is she?
Yond, in the yerd I trowe that she be,
Seide this man, and she wol come anon.
Ey, maister! welcom be ye, by Seint John!
Seide this wyf, how fare ye, hertely?
The frere ariseth up ful curteisly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kiste hire sweete, and chirketh as a sparwe
With his lippes: Dame, quod he, right weel,
As he that is youre servant every deel.
Thanked be God, that yow yaf soule and lyf,
Yet saugh I nat this day so fair a wyf
In al the chirche, God so save me!
Ye, God amende defautes, sire, quod she,
Higates welcome be ye, by my fey!
Graunt mercy, dame, this have I founde alwey,
But of youre grete goodnesse, by youre leve,
I wolde prey yow that ye nat yow greve,
I wole with Thomas speke a litel throwe.
Thise curats been ful negligent and slowe
To grope tendrely a conscience.
In shrift, in prechyng is my diligence,
And studie; in Petres wordes, and in Poules
I walke, and fasshe cristen mennes soules,
To yelden Jhesu Crist his propre rente;
To sprede his word is set al myn entente.
NOW, by youre leve, O deere sire, quod she,
Chideth him weel, for seinte Triniteel!
He is as angry as a pissemeye,
Though that he have al that he kan desire.
Though I him wrye anyght and make hym warm,
And on hym leye my leg, outhir myn arm,
He groneth lyk oure boor, lith in oure sty.
Oother desport ryght noon of hym have I;
I may nat plesse hym in no maner cas.
O Thomas! Je vous dy, Thomas! Thomas!
This maketh the feend, this moste ben amended;
Ire is a thyng that hye God defended,
And therof wol I speke a word or two.
Now, maister, quod the wyf, er that I go,
What wol ye dyne? I wol go therabout.
Now dame, quod he, Je vous dy sanz doute,
Have I nat of a capoun but the lyvere,
And of youre softe breed nat but a shyvere,
And after that a roasted pigges heed,
But that I nolde no beest for me were deed,

Thanne hadde I with yow boomy suffisaunce,
I am a man of litel sustenaunce.
My spirit hath his fostryng in the Bible.
The body is ay so redy and penyble
To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.
I prey yow, dame, ye be nat anoyed
Though I so freendly yow my conseil shewe;
By God, I wolde nat telle it but a fewe!
NOW, sire, quod she, but o word er I go:
My child is deed withinne thise wykes two.
Soone after that ye wente out of this toun.
His deeth saugh I by revelacioun,
Seith this frere, at hoom in oure dortour.
I dar wel seyn that, er that half an hour
After his deeth, I saugh hym born to blisse
In myn avisoun, so God me wisse!
So dide our sexteyn and oure fermerer,
That han been trewe freres fifty yeer;
They may now, God be thanked of his loone!
Maken hir jubilee, and walke allone.
And up I roos, and al oure covent eke,
With many a teere trikyng on my cheke,
Withouthen noyse or claterynge of belles;
Te deum was oure song and nothyng elles,
Save that to Crist I seyde an orisoun,
Thankyng hym of his revelacioun.
for, sire and dame, trusteth me right weel,
Oure orisons been moore effectueel,
And moore we seen of Cristes secree thynges
Than burel folk, although they weren kynges.
We lyve in poverté and in abstinence,
And burel folk in richesse and despenche
Of mete and drynke, and in hir foul delit.
We han this worldes lust al in despit.
Lazar and Dives lyveden diversly,
And diverse guerdon hadden they therby.
Whoso wol preyre, he moot faste and be cleue,
And fatte his soule and make his body lene.
We fare as seith thapostle; clooth and foode
Suffisen us, though they be nat ful goode.
We han this worldes lust al in despit.
Lazar and Dives lyveden diversly,
And diverse guerdon hadden they therby.
Whoso wol preyre, he moot faste and be cleue,
And fatte his soule and make his body lene.
We fare as seith thapostle; clooth and foode
Suffisen us, though they be nat ful goode.
The clenness and the fastyng of us freres
Maketh that Crist accepteth oure preyres.
Lo, Moyses forty dayes and forty nyght
fasted, er that the heighe God of myght
Spak with hym in the mountayne of Synay.
With empty wombe, fastyng many a day,
Receyved he the lawe that was writen
With Goddes fynger; and Elye, wel ye witen,
In mount Oreb, er he hadde any speche
With hye God, that is oure lyves leche,
He fasted longe, and was in contemplanche.
Aaron, that hadde the temple in governaunce,
And eek the othere preestes everichon,
Into the temple whan they sholde gon
To preyre for the peple, and do servyse,
They nolden drynken, in no maner wyse,
No drynke, which that myghte hem dronke make,
But there, in abstinence preyre and wake,
Lest that they deyden; taak heede what I seye,
But they be sobre that for the peple preyre,
War that! I seye namoore, for it suffiseth.
Oure Lord Jhesu, as hooly writ devyseth,
Yaf us ensample of fastyng and preyres;

Therfore we mendynants, we sely freres,
Been wedded to poverté and continence,
To charite, humblesse, and abstinence;
To persecucioun for rightwisesse,
To wepyng, misericorde, and clenness;
And therfore may ye se that oure preyres,
I speche of us, we mendynants, we freres,
Been to the hye God moore acceptable
Than youre, with youre feestes at the table.
fro Paradys first, if I shal nat lye,
Was man out chased for his glotonye;
And chaast was man in Paradys, certeyn.
NOW herkne now, Thomas, what I shal seyn,
I have no text of it, as I suppose,
But I shal fynde it in a maner glose,
That specially oure sweete Lord Jhesus
Spak this by freres, when he seyde thus:
Blessed be they that poore in spirit been,
And so forth al the gospel may ye seen,
Wher it be liker oure professioun,
Or hirs that swymmen in possessioun.
for hire pompe and on hire glotonye!
And for hir lewednesse, I hem diffye!
Me thynketh they been lyk Jovinyan,
fat as a whale, and walkyng as a swan,
Al vinolent as botel in the spence.
hir preyre is of ful greet reverence
Whan they for soules seye the Psalm of Davit,
Lo, Buf! they seye, Cor meum eructavit!
Who folweth Cristes gospel and his foore,
But we that humble been and chaast and poore,
Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?
Therfore, right as an hawk up, at a sours,
Up springeth into their, right so prayeres
Of charitable and chaste biay freres
Maken hir sours to Goddes eres two.
Thomas! Thomas! so moot I ryde or go,
And by that lord that clepid is Seint Yve,
Nere thou oure brother, sholdestou nat thryve.
In oure chapitre praye we day and nyght
To Crist, that he thee sende heele and myght,
Thy body for to weelden hastily.
GOD woot, quod he, nothyng therof feele I!
As help me Crist, as in a fewe yeres
I han spent upon diverse manere freres
ful many a pound; yet fare I never the bet.
Certeyn my good I have almost biset,
farwel, my gold, for it is al ago!
The frere answerde, O Thomas, dostow so?
What nedeth yow diverse freres seche?
What nedeth hym that hath a parfit leche
To sechen othere leches in the toun?
Your inconstance is youre confusioun.
Holde ye thanne me, or elles oure covent,
To prayre for yow been insufficient?
Thomas, that jape nys nat worth a myte;
Your maladye is for we han to lyte.
Al yif that covent half a quarter otes;
Al yif that covent four and twenty grotes;
Al yif that frere a peny, and lat hym go.
Nay, nay, Thomas! it may nothyng be so.
What is a ferthyng worth parted in twelve?
Lo, ech thyng that is oned in itselfe

Is moore strong than whan it is toscatered.
Thomas! of me thou shalt nat been yflatered;
Thou woldest han oure labour al for noght.
The hye God, that al this world hath wrought,
Seith that the werkman worthy is his hyre.
Thomas! noght of youre tresor I desire
As for myself, but that al oure covent
To preyre for yow is ay so diligent,
And for to buylden Cristes owene chirche.
Thomas! if ye wol lerne for to wirche,
Of buyldyng up of chirches may ye fynde
If it be good, in Thomas lyf of Inde.
Ye lye heere ful of anguish and of ire,
With which the devel set youre herte afyre,
And chiden heere the sely innocent,
Your wyf, that is so meke and pacient.
And therfore, Thomas, trowe me if thee leste,
Ne stryve nat with thy wyf, as for thy beste;
And ber this word away now, by thy feith,
Touchyng this thyng, lo, what the wise seith:
Withinne thyn hous ne be thou no leoun;
To thy subgits do noon oppressioun;
Ne make thyne aqueyntance nat to flee.
And, Thomas, yet eftsoones I charge thee,
Be war from hire that in thy bosom slepeth;
War fro the serpent that so slytly crepeth
Under the gras, and styngeth subtilly.
Be war, my sone, and herkne paciently,
That twenty thousand men han lost hir lyves
for stryvyng with hir lemmans and hir wyves.
Now sith ye han so hooly and meke a wyf,
What nedeth yow, Thomas, to maken stryf?
Ther nys, ywys, no serpent so cruel,
Whan man tret on his tayl, ne half so fel,
As womman is, whan she hath caught an ire;
Vengeance is thanne al that they desire.
Ire is a synne, oon of the grete of sevene,
Abhomynable unto the God of hevене;
And to hymself it is destruccioun.
This every lewed viker or persoun
Kan seye, how ire engendreth homycide.
Ire is, in sooth, executour of pryde.
I koude of ire seye so muche sorwe,
My tale sholde laste til tomorwe.
And therfore preyre I God bothe day and nyght,
An irous man, God sende hym litel myght.
It is greet harme and, certes, greet pitee,
To sette an irous man in heigh degre.
WHILLOM ther was an irous potestat,
As seith Senek, that, duryng his
estaat,
Upon a day out ryden knyghtes two,
And as fortune wolde that it were so,
That oon of hem cam hoom, that
oother noght.
Anon the knyght before the juge is broght,
That seyde thus: Thou hast thy felawe slayn,
for which I deme thee to the deeth, certayn.
And to another knyght comanded he,
Go lede hym to the deeth, I charge thee!
And happed as they wente by the weye
Toward the place ther he sholde deye,
The knyght cam, which men wenden had be deed.